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WILLIAM G. FLETCHER

1974

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CHALLENGE & RESPONSE

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CHALLENGE & RESPONSE:

MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

1914-1945

John H. Cushman

1988

National Defense University
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Washington, DC

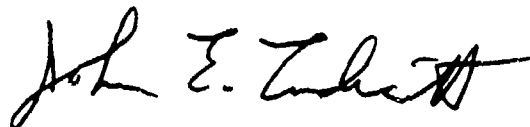
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Foreword

What are the factors that help create superior military institutions and forces? In a comprehensive and exhaustive study of seven nations involved in major wars from 1914 through 1945, twenty-one respected military historians scrutinized each nation's military policy and strategy, its operations, and its tactical performance. According to these experts, not many of the combatant nations deserve high marks, especially in the spheres of operations and tactics.

In this concise monograph, Lieutenant General John H. Cushman, US Army (Retired), summarizes the findings of "The Military Effectiveness Project," focusing on the operational and tactical analyses. He shows how the right combination of insight and execution, from the top leaders on down, made the difference between success and defeat. In presenting these lessons learned, General Cushman makes a meaningful contribution to students of military affairs.



John E. Endicott,
Director, Institute for
National Strategic Studies

Preface

In 1984, I participated in the Military Effectiveness Project, a major historical study conducted at the Mershon Center at the Ohio State University, sponsored by the Office of Net Assessment, Department of Defense. This study analyzed the military effectiveness of national military organizations on the distinct levels of policymaking and strategy and operations and tactics. I wrote one of two summary essays on the material that the historians produced, and what follows is in essence that essay. The full study with all of the historical essays is scheduled for publication by Allen and Unwin in 1988.

The Military Effectiveness Project covered three specific time periods in the first half of the Twentieth Century: World War I, the inter-war period from 1919-1939, and World War II. For each of these periods a historian examined the national military experiences of one of seven major powers: Great Britain, the United States, France, Japan, Russia, Germany, and Italy. A guidance essay asked a series of specific questions, first on the policy and strategic levels of decisionmaking and then on the operational execution and the tactical performance of military institutions on the battlefield or in the preparation for war.¹ The military historians who wrote these essays numbered among the most eminent in their fields.²

The use of a guidance essay with specific questions gave a coherence and unity that is rare for a multi-authored study and made possible comparisons across national frontiers and periods of time. The essay that follows is thus a personal commentary on the operational

and tactical issues raised by the Military Effectiveness Project. It is not offered here as a complete study in and of itself but rather to raise interest in this important and ground breaking study. I hope that it will spark that interest.

CHALLENGE & RESPONSE

War is the great auditor of institutions," so Correlli Barnett has written in his *Swordbearers*.³ The historians whose work is collected in the Military Effectiveness Project audited the performance of seven national military institutions in two world wars and in the long period between those wars. Only two nations, the United States and Great Britain, were victors in both wars. One, Germany, lost in both. Russia emerged defeated in the first and victorious in the second. Italy and Japan were on the winning side in the first, then lost in the second. France won its first war, collapsed after ten months of the second, and then with new forces raised abroad and at home after liberation by Anglo-American forces could claim to be a "victorious" power at the end.

Each of the three periods was a time of challenge to national military institutions on one hand and of response by those institutions on the other. For these nations and their military institutions, the two wars were exhausting, terrible, life or death audits. What can we learn from the manner in which these military institutions responded or failed to respond to the challenge of war and of what was, in the perspective of history, a period of two decades of preparation for war? And perhaps even more important, how can we apply what we learn to our current American military institutions?

* * * * *

Our twenty-one historians assessed the political effectiveness of military institutions according to three criteria, the strategic effectiveness according to seven

criteria, the operational effectiveness according to six, and the tactical effectiveness according to seven. Although the political and strategic direction of national military forces and those forces' effectiveness in the operational and tactical spheres each have their effect upon the other, this summary essay will address primarily the operational and tactical spheres. These two fields make up the military professional's fundamental line of work. They comprise the realm in which the people of a nation and their political leadership have a right to expect professional military competence.

Appreciating the difficulties as well as the limitations involved, the historians were asked to give a subjective "grade" to the performance of the national military institutions, which they had surveyed, for the period covered. While some were reluctant, each finally did so.*

Reviewing the authors' texts and the ratings in the operational/tactical areas, I credit the contributing historians with rating fairly and well. The results as to tactical performance were:

*Some words of caution are in order. Among them: ratings are highly subjective. They encompass all of a nation's forces -- land, sea, and air. Each rating is an average; in most nations' audits and for most periods, major deviations can be cited from that norm. The period of 1919 to 1939 or 1941 was for some nations (Italy and Japan) in large part a time of actual fighting; for others (e.g., the United States) this was a time of no combat whatever with the test coming at the outbreak of war; for others (e.g., the Soviet Union and Germany) there was during this period the combat experience of the Spanish Civil War.

Two "A's"

Germany in 1919-1940 and in World War II

Seven "B's"

Germany in World War I

Japan in World War I and (based on the first years in those periods only) in 1919-1940 and World War II

The Soviet Union in 1919-1941 and (eventually) in World War II

The United States in World War II

Four "C's"

The United States in 1919-1941

The French and British (eventually) in World War I (both "F" initially)

Russia (overall) in World War I (composite of a mixed bag of ratings until the late-1917 collapse)

Four "D's"

Italy in 1919-1939

The United States in World War I

Great Britain in 1919-1939 and World War II

Four "F's"

France in 1919-1939 and through its June 1940 defeat in World War II

Italy in World War I and World War II

The distribution of grades as to operational performance was about the same:

One "A"

The United States in World War II

Nine "B's"

The United States in 1919-1941

Germany in all three periods (with an "A" only in the first phases of World War I and World War II)

The Soviet Union in 1919-1941 and (eventually) in World War II

Japan in World War I and (again, based on the first years in those periods only) in 1919-1940 and World War II

Five "C's"

The United States in World War I

Great Britain in 1919-1939 and World War II

Russia in World War I (again, a composite until Russia's collapse)

Italy in 1919-1939

Four "D's"

Great Britain (overall) in World War I (rated "F/D" initially, rising to "C/B")

France (overall) in World I (like Britain, "F/D" initially, rising later)

Italy in World Wars I and II

Two "F's"

France in 1919-1939 and World War II
(first ten months)

Thus, in the spheres of operations and tactics, where military competence would seem to be a nation's rightful due, the twenty-one "auditors' reports" suggest for the most part less than general professional military competence and sometimes abysmal incompetence. One can doubt whether any other profession in these seven nations during the same periods would have received such poor ratings by similarly competent outside observers.

Why should nations wish for a high order of operational and tactical performance? Is performance in these areas essential for success in war? One might assume that success in war requires an order of operational and tactical performance at least equal to that of one's enemy. However, the verdict is considerably mixed. In World War I, victory came to neither Britain nor France until their operational and tactical performances finally reached what their respective historians called a "B." The same was true for the Soviets in World War II. On the other hand, one must note the surprisingly low ratings given to Britain in World War II.

These audits clearly underline that high-quality operational and tactical performance is not enough (see twice defeated Germany, highly rated in operations and tactics but whose political and strategic direction received an "F" in both wars). Moreover, Japan's failing performance in the political and strategic spheres nullified her "B's" in operations and tactics early in World War II.

Leaving aside whether effectiveness in operations and tactics is essential for victory, it is clear that first-

rate operational and tactical performance is a virtue to be sought by those who are responsible for military forces. One must recognize that competence on the battlefield saves time and conserves lives.* These are the areas in which military institutions are supposed to do not only correctly but well. Yet, from these auditors' reports, most national forces failed to achieve a high performance in either category. We need to understand how and why this happened. There well may be lessons in these accounts that are useful for those charged with seeking operational and tactical excellence in our own military institutions.

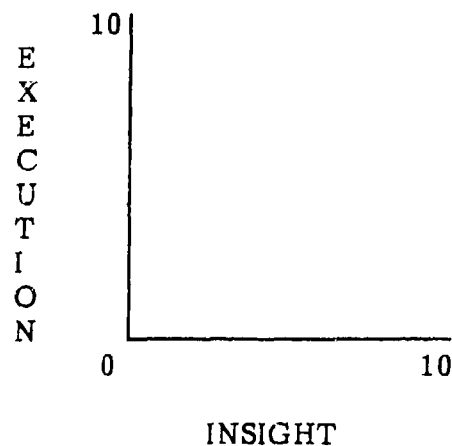
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In analyzing the performance of military institutions one has to speak of challenge and response. One dimension of an individual's or institution's response is that of "insight." How well did individuals responsible in a situation perceive reality? How well did they understand the nature of the challenge that confronted them? The other dimension of response is that of "execution." Understanding the situation in whatever way they did, how well did those in positions of responsibility bring about the measures that they saw as necessary to meet the situation? In other words, how well did they adapt to what Clausewitz called "real war" as opposed to war on paper?

One can portray these two qualities on a two-dimensional chart with each dimension scaled from 0 to

*For one example, see how superior German effectiveness in the operational/tactical spheres paid off in speed of decision and cost in lives against the British and French in May-June 1940.

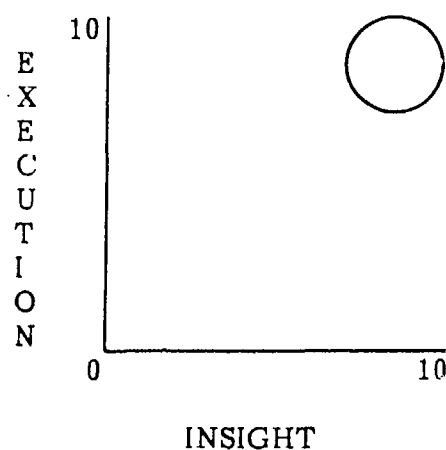
10.* From the essays of the Military Project, we can conclude that for the highest quality of response to challenge, military institutions and individuals must have a high rating in both "insight" and "execution."



Let us apply this method of portra, to one of t major successes in this series of audits -- that of Fie Marshal William Slim in Burma, from spring 1942 when he arrived "to help pick up the pieces" to 1944 and 1945 when the corps and divisions in his command were among the most effective of World War II.⁴ First of all, "insight" is surely there; Professor Williamson Murray describes how Slim grasped the essentials of his situation and saw what needed to be done. Second, and equally important, Slim's "execution" left little to be desired. His program took time, but its organized, systematic, and consistent pursuit brought success.

*Obviously, the matter is not as simple as this.

Slim's achievement encompassed the full range of tactics and operations, including logistics and administration. Especially noteworthy moreover, was the independence of thought and action within a common scheme that he instilled in his senior commanders -- a sine qua non for true tactical and operational competence in a military organization. We can plot Slim in Burma:*



In his performance, Field Marshal Slim followed the basic approach which holds true for successful leaders at any level of command -- from the tank company and

*Certainly one cannot justly condense an appraisal of Slim's World War II performance into this one chart. Yet to think deeply in these two dimensions sheds useful light on his achievement and on the nature of his genius. And any future commander who seeks to do as well must look at his task in these two basic dimensions.

infantry battalion, or naval ship, or fighter squadron on up.
In the simplest terms:

- a) Take responsibility for the command.
- b) Diagnose the situation accurately and set the objective.
- c) Develop an appropriate action plan.
- d) Execute the plan well, adapting to conditions.

Slim was a major field commander, far from the base that generated his resources. He had relatively little influence on what was provided to him. His genius lay in making extraordinarily good use of the human as well as material resources which were provided. Wise enough to know that the kind of change he sought would take time, he made good use of that time through a consistent, insightful, and orderly program of action.

In his description of the 1917-1918 performance of Admiral William H. Sims, US Navy, Professor Timothy Nenninger gives a similar example, except that Admiral Sims's influence extended deeply into determining the kind of resources provided.⁵ In 1916 the United States had adopted a naval building program to create by 1925 a fleet of 60 capital ships. Nenninger points out that upon America's entrance into the war, the Navy sent Sims to London to determine naval requirements and eventually to become the American naval commander in Europe. The admiral quickly realized that German submarines were the greatest threat to our strategy and recommended that the United States concentrate on building antisubmarine craft and merchant shipping. Although other naval leaders continued to push for the 1916 program, the administration accepted Sims's recommendation and postponed capital ship construction.

As the destroyers and antisubmarine craft arrived, Sims as operational commander deployed them effectively to escort convoys as they passed through the most dangerous U-boat zones. In this case, the insight and execution which led to the US Navy's successful response to challenge were in large part a cooperative accomplishment, shared by Sims overseas and the naval establishment in the United States.

The accounts in the essays of the Military Effectiveness Project suggest that success in meeting the operational and tactical challenge demands both insight and execution. One without the other will not do. For example, Professor MacGregor Knox describes how Italy's Army Chief of Staff in 1941 assessed the abilities of that Army's junior officers.⁶ General Roatta underlined their deficiencies as follows:

- a) Insufficient capacity for command (lack of authority . . . timidity . . . uncertainty).
- b) Inadequate knowledge of the mechanical side of weapons.
- c) Limited knowledge of small unit tactics.
- d) Rudimentary knowledge of communications equipment and organization.
- e) Insufficient knowledge on how to read topographic maps, and little understanding of the compass.
- f) Insufficient knowledge of field fortifications.
- g) Inadequate conditioning for long marches.
- h) Total administrative ignorance.

Although, from Professor Knox's account, General Roatta may have deserved an "8" or so in insight, the institutional actions to correct the conditions diagnosed among its junior leaders seem to have been little better than a "3"; consequently, the Italian Army suffered from inadequate junior officer leadership until its 1943 surrender.

Likewise, without the appropriate insight -- that is, without an institution's leadership understanding the situation confronting the institution -- any plan of action, however systematically developed and vigorously carried out, will succeed only by accident and will generally lead to disaster.

Examples of lack of insight abound. Perhaps the classic is that of the leadership of the French Army in the 1919-1939 period, described in telling fashion by Colonel Robert Doughty.⁷ Doughty's analysis is devastating. He concludes that, although between the wars "the French had paid close attention to the tactics, organization, equipment, and training of their forces, . . . France failed to prepare a military force as effective as that of her enemy." In 1939, "France was prepared to go to war with a system that was supremely logical and closely coordinated" However, the army had tragically "come up with the wrong formula." The French Army perished in 1940 because its military leadership in 1919-1939 performed at something like level "2" in insight, even though they may have deserved perhaps an "8" in the execution of the action plans stemming from that faulty insight. With great efficiency, France's army built the Maginot Line, trained its infantry and artillery systematically in the wrong tactical conceptions, and prepared for the next war with a self-satisfied assuredness that it possessed all the answers.

* * * * *

In this full period, 1914-1945, perhaps the most stirring success in "challenge and response" on the part of a major operational force and by the home base that generated and supported it is that of the Royal Air Force (RAF) Fighter Command. From 1936 when Britain first formed Fighter Command to the Battle of Britain which began in July 1940, the RAF created a fighting organization that saved the British people and nation from invasion.

Professor Murray's mention of this performance is brief,⁸ but other sources tell the full story.⁹ The scene was grim indeed in the mid-1930s. Having seized power in 1933, Hitler was rearming Germany and building a mighty air force. Fact, such as the Japanese bombing of Shanghai in 1932, and fiction along the lines of a series of novels predicting catastrophic air attacks had combined to terrify the public. Indeed, near-panic was beginning to appear, which directly contributed to the British appeasement policy of 1938.¹⁰

The British had thus far neglected air defense; they had built the Royal Air Force on the doctrine that "the bomber will always get through." The founder of the RAF, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Hugh Trenchard, said in 1923, "Fighter defense must . . . be kept to the smallest possible number . . . in a sense only a concession to the weakness of the civilians, who would demand protection" Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin said in Parliament, in 1932, "The only defense is offence, which means you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves."

Unprotected by a fighter force, in the mid-1930s the British Isles lay open and exposed to air attack. Fifty years later, it is still instructive to study how a "small number of dedicated men" from 1934 through 1939 managed to prepare "the aircraft and the air force that

would be required for modern war." Among these men were Lord Swinton, Secretary of State for Air, 1935-1938; Chief of Air Staff Sir Edward Ellington, 1933-1937; aircraft designers such as Reginald Mitchell at Supermarine and Sydney Camm at Hawkers; and scientists such as H.T. Tizard, P.M.S. Blackett, and R.A. Watson-Watt.

Also among them was Air Chief Marshal Hugh C.T. Dowding, who in 1936 moved from his position as research and development chief of the RAF to take command of the newly formed Fighter Command. In the face of strong institutional opposition within the RAF itself to air defense, his task was not easy. In November 1935, the Hawker Hurricane had made its first test flight; the Supermarine Spitfire's maiden flight came four months later. These two superlative fighters, each with eight wing-mounted machine guns, went quickly into production. Four years later, in the hands of RAF pilots, they won the Battle of Britain.

In the meantime, under the cloak of deepest secrecy, British scientists developed radar, an invention that revolutionized the conduct of air defense. And the manner of its development in the closest harmony with the airmen and the organizations that would depend on it reached a standard for military-technical cooperation in command and control systems development that has probably not been equaled since.

In this milieu, Dowding established Fighter Command's organization and concept of operations. In July 1940, after Dunkirk's evacuation and despite the loss of the fighters sent uselessly to the Continent, Fighter Command stood as Britain's sole defense against the Luftwaffe. Brilliantly using and conserving both fighters and pilots, supported by a maintenance organization that performed miracles of aircraft repair, linked by communications installed by the British Post Office, receiving reports from

radars and from ground observers on hilltops and rooftops along the air routes into England from the Continent, and directing the battle hour-by-hour and minute-by-minute from control centers that they had designed and built, Dowding and his command won the Battle of Britain.* The British political-military air establishment members, especially Dowding, his staff, and his commanders, deserve "10's" in both insight and execution.

Notwithstanding that it encompasses the base that generated and supported the operational forces as well as the operational forces themselves, this Fighter Command case also illustrates the fundamental requirements of leadership -- taking responsibility for command, diagnosing the situation accurately and setting the objectives, developing an appropriate action plan, and executing the plan well.

However, in this case the effort was a collective endeavor, with several changes in key personalities over a five- to six-year period, with no identifiable single leader either in charge or fully accountable, and with a "rolling" action plan, the details of which evolved as the situation developed.

The very nature of large military institutions, such as a nation's army, or navy, or air force, or its armed forces as a whole, makes it difficult to have anything other than a collective, or shared, responsibility. Unlike the shaping of

*With displays and photographs, the Battle of Britain exhibition at the RAF Museum at Hendon in northwest London vividly tells the story. The text at the photograph of Hugh Dowding says, in effect, that in any list, however short, of military men of whom it can be said that "he saved the nation," Dowding's name must be included.

an infantry battalion, combat ship, or fighter squadron, which a keen commander can carry out effectively in a matter of months, and even unlike the bringing of a major command to a high state of effectiveness (as Slim did in Burma over a two- to three-year period), the improvement of such large military institutions as a nation's army, or navy, or air force involves a very long period of time -- one that stretches out for half a decade or more and includes the terms of office of two or more chiefs of staff.

* * * * *

As in any walk of life, the competence of a military organization is a function of its leadership from the top down to the bottom of its chain of command. Gay Hammerman and Richard G. Sheridan have given us a striking example of the significance of leadership in the tactical sphere.¹¹ They examine the effectiveness of twenty-four representative divisions of the European theater in World War II -- twelve German, five British, and seven American. Using comparative techniques, they rate these divisions in order of battlefield effectiveness. With only one exception, the 88th Infantry Division of the United States Army, the first ten divisions are German.

In their study, Hammerman and Sheridan investigate why the 88th Infantry Division was such an exception to the performance of the other American and British units. They researched such factors as the quality of manpower, the strength of the division's cadre, the division's stability, the length and quality of training, the administrative support provided by higher headquarters, and the fashion in which replacements were introduced into the division in combat. Each of these factors had an effect, but in none did the 88th Division differ in any significant fashion from the other American divisions studied whose performance by no means matched that of the 88th. The essential

difference discovered was the quality of the division's top leadership.

In scores of interviews with veterans of the 88th, Hammerman and Sheridan sought the specific characteristics of top leadership. What they found was

strict discipline, courage, aggressiveness, personal presence in the front lines, insistence that every job be carried out properly, efforts to build esprit de corps, prompt relief of any subordinate who could not or would not do his job, and professional competence. In training, strict discipline was the most prominent characteristic; in combat, courage and personal presence in the front lines were most prominent [emphasis in the original].¹²

The study provides compelling profiles of the division commander, Major General John E. Sloan, the assistant division commander (and later division commander), Brigadier General Paul W. Kendall, and of the three regimental commanders, Colonels Joseph B. Crawford, James C. Fry, and Arthur S. Champeny.

To conclude that "quality of leadership" is decisive is no profound discovery. From time immemorial, and around the world's military forces today, we know that superior battalion, squadron, and warship commanders and their seniors in the chain of command can take ordinary people and produce extraordinary results. What is of interest to us is the answer to the question: "How can military institutions produce leadership at the operational and tactical levels that is for the most part superior?" One cannot rest satisfied with the explanation that Slim was an exceptional case, or that the 88th Infantry Division was one of a kind. Those who are responsible for generating our military forces have

the obligation to seek such standards as the normal level of professional military performance.

On what does the generation of such a quality of leadership depend? How do those who govern military institutions go about building in peacetime (and in war, should war come) a pattern of highly competent battle leadership? In their accounts, Professors Earl Ziemke and John Jessup describe the methods that Josef Stalin used from the mid-1930s through the end of the Great Patriotic War. Ziemke describes how Stalin first destroyed the Red Army's officer corps and then rebuilt it. Believing that its officers represented a threat to him personally, to the party, and to the nation, in that apparent order, Stalin carried out a program of extermination of national military leadership unequalled in its scope and ferocity in modern times, and perhaps in history. In 1937-1938, Stalin saw to the execution, exile, or disappearance of the chief of the armed forces General Staff, the commanders of the air force and the navy, the inspectors of artillery and armor, 13 of 15 army commanders, 57 of 85 corps commanders, 110 of 195 division commanders, and 220 of 406 brigade commanders. In all, more than 35,000 officers were liquidated or removed, a number that included 90 percent of all generals and 80 percent of all colonels.¹³

Having destroyed those officers who showed any independence of thought and silenced those younger officers with talent who might not toe the mark, Stalin then brought to high-level command and staff positions officers who were more remarkable for their political loyalties than for ability. Rightly enough, Jessup says, "Stalin's greatest skill was in terrorizing those around him." Although Stalin's purge dealt the Red Army a body blow, Jessup goes on to say, "Even so, [Stalin's] ability to select highly competent personnel to direct the war both on the battlefield and on the home front is a tribute to his leadership."¹⁴

This was "leadership" of the most ruthless kind; those senior commanders who did not produce satisfactory results on the battlefield were done away with, encouraging a kind of fear-driven competence on the part of those who remained. To produce the necessary junior officer leadership, the Soviet Army in 1942 instituted a program of training officer candidates in a three-month course at the field army (later front) level. Jessup points out,

Some 540,000 platoon level officers were produced in this manner. Mid-course in the war, when the issue of [national] survival became less immediate, officer training was extended to one year for infantry officers and 18 months for specialists. Although these officers, and most of their superiors, were generally rated inferior to their German counterparts, they were obviously successful enough and were in large enough numbers to win the war.¹⁵

Win the war the Soviet Union did, with a herculean effort at a terrible cost which, among other accomplishments, produced operational and tactical performance at a "B" level. What this 1937-1945 experience and the forty years since means as to the quality of Soviet officer leadership from top to bottom today may be uncertain, but it gives no grounds for complacency. Now, let us take a look at Germany.

Under the personal command and under the strategic and indeed the operational direction of a dictator as equally abhorrent as Stalin, the German Army's officer corps in World War II rendered a battlefield performance that was, in general, measurably superior to that of any of the armies with which it fought.

That this is so seems no longer a matter of dispute. We have the testimony of senior commanders who fought the Germans, like Field Marshal Sir Michael Carver, who has said,

There is no doubt that the Germans, of all ranks, were more highly professional as soldiers than the British. Their knowledge and practical application of the weapons available to them was in almost all cases superior. . . . They were tough, skillful, determined, and well-disciplined soldiers.¹⁶

We have historians' judgments, Russell F. Weigley among others. In the epilogue to Eisenhower's Lieutenants, Weigley sums up his comparison of relative military performance in Europe from D-Day in 1944 through the end of the war:

Pitted against the German army, the United States Army suffered long from a relative absence of the finely honed professional skill of the Germans, officers and men, in every aspect of tactics and operations. . . . [The German Army] remained qualitatively superior to the American army, formation for formation, throughout far too many months of the American army's greatest campaign.¹⁷

Trevor N. Dupuy, in his Numbers, Prediction, and War, has convincingly laid out measurable evidence of German superiority.¹⁸ Dupuy's comprehensive and methodical analysis of scores of division-level actions in North Africa, Italy, and the Western front from the Normandy landings to the war's end has established a 20 to 30 percent combat superiority on the part of the Germans whenever they faced British and American troops in equal numbers, meaning that roughly 80 German troops were the

battle equal of 100 British or American. This German battlefield superiority was a product of, on the whole, superior combat leadership on the part of the German Army's officer corps.¹⁹

What made the Germans so good? One can simply say that even though its officer corps expanded some sixty times from 1934 to 1944, the German Army had thoroughly indoctrinated its officers in how to fight well, and that these leaders behaved in battle as they had been trained.

But how did this come about? Professor Jurgen Forster writes that this behavior "was heavily shaped by cultural traditions dating back to Imperial Germany."²⁰ The officer corps of the German Army in 1939-1945 was partially the product of a tradition of battlefield excellence reaching back to the early 1800s when Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Clausewitz, and others instituted fundamental reforms in the Prussian Army. In turn, successive generations of senior Prussian and German leadership perpetuated those reforms. The German officers in the field in 1939-1945 were the products of a system of schooling and unit training that for a century had developed and preached a consistent doctrine of battlefield leadership, and a chain of command that uniformly practiced what it preached.

To define in the simplest terms the essence of what German officers were taught and what they practiced, one can go to a document published in 1953 by the Historical Division, Headquarters, United States Army, Europe (USAREUR). In 1949, the US Army had published a new edition of its Field Manual 100-5, Field Service Regulations, Operations. This comprehensive revision of its basic operational doctrine was in essence the US Army's description of its way of fighting based both on its traditions and on its World War II experience. The USAREUR Historical Division gave this field manual to a

panel of German officers, consisting of Generaloberst Franz Halder* and four generals and two colonels selected by him. The Historical Division described the panel as "distinguished members of the former German General Staff who had had extensive experience in the preparation of training literature, particularly that dealing with tactical doctrine, and who had proved their worth as commanders in combat."²¹

Halder and his fellow officers were asked for a "critical analysis and evaluation" of this 1949 version of FM 100-5. Their 156-page report begins by describing succinctly the "main objectives in training in leadership" as seen by the German Army. These were

- a) A great capacity for independent action on all levels of command;
- b) Adherence to the mission; that is, a moral obligation to act at all times in the spirit of the assigned mission;
- c) Avoidance of a fixed pattern of action;
- d) The ability to make "complete," that is, clear and unambiguous decisions, and, in carrying them out, to establish a definite point of main effort;

*General Halder had been Chief of the German Army General Staff from 1938 until 1942 when, according to the biographical summary in the USAREUR text, he was removed by Hitler "owing to differences of opinion on matters of strategy and ethics, and because of alleged obstructionism." In July 1944, the day after the attempt on Hitler's life, the Gestapo arrested Halder and he spent the rest of the war in prison.

- e) A constant concern for the welfare of the men and the conservation of their combat efficiency.²²

These lines on military leadership sum up almost everything there is to say about how to fight. And the point is that this is not simply what the German field manual said; this is what German officers generally did on the field of battle.²³

Among other trenchant comments, the Halder report has this to say about the US Army's 1949 version of FM 100-5:

War is full of imponderables and surprises. Only a commander who can depend on his own ingenuity and that of his men will be able to make the improvisations dictated by the moment and master situations not described in the manuals. True, in order to do this, he will have to know exactly what it is he wants to do The attempt to find a recipe for every single situation with which the lower echelons may be confronted occasionally results in a cut-and-dried "recipe" far more detailed than is needed.²⁴

If the achievement of an equivalent level of skill in the battle leadership of the American Army were simply a matter of rewriting the doctrine, there would be few problems -- but to bring about the actual application of doctrine, in practice, there's the rub.

How did the Germans do it? One commentator argues that the secret to the German Army officer corps' performance was not a matter of genetic superiority, or an inherently superior German military ability, or a product of German culture, but rather a matter of Germany's "more

effective military institutions," in particular "the Prussian General Staff, which later became the German General Staff."²⁵

We should examine that thesis. Even recognizing that for more than a century the Prussian, then German, officers operated within the framework of a General Staff, we need to ask if that particular mechanism is the only way today to bring about the institutionalizing of operational and tactical excellence in an officer corps, and in particular in the American officer corps. What the German General Staff system provided was in essence

- 1) Very high standards of performance.
- 2) A school system, which, with historical and other study and thought, developed and fostered the spread of those standards, and indoctrinated the officer corps with what those standards meant in practice.
- 3) A chain of command that understood what these standards meant and saw to it that they governed what officers did in units and on staffs.
- 4) A system of selection for responsible positions that ensured that those selected met the standards and screened out those who did not.

Does that require adopting the German General Staff concept? One would think not.

Weighing the troubling aspect of the 1939-1945 German performance, Professor Forster writes that the German Army's battle leadership, heavily shaped by its Imperial German roots, also derived from "the amalgamation of National Socialism and German soldierly

tradition."²⁶ Forster (whose opinion, incidentally, of Haider's ethics is not high) says that "the ready acceptance of [Hitler's] racial goals by the military establishment and most of the officer corps should not be overlooked." He alludes to "the deep-seated hostility to 'Russian bolshevism' which permeated the officer corps throughout the Weimar period" and says that when Hitler, in planning the attack into Russia, made known his determination "to convert the Wehrmacht into an instrument of extermination alongside the SS, . . . [i]t was the Wehrmacht's senior officers and their legal advisers who cast Hitler's ideological intentions into legally valid form." In Forster's words, "Professionalism and ideology went together well."²⁷

Later, Forster quotes Field Marshal von Brauchitsch saying in the winter of 1940-1941, "there could be not the slightest doubt about the fact that the training of the soldier to a determined and aggressive fighter could not be separated from a lively education in the National Socialist sense." Forster describes how the German company commander was expected not simply to "forge the company as a compact unit and both lead the individual man into and keep him within the battle-community (Kampfgemeinschaft)" but was also tasked with the ideological training of his troops toward "an emotional instinct" of the Volksgemeinschaft's needs and a staunch belief in the Fuhrer."²⁸ (Volksgemeinschaft translates roughly into "people's community" and connotes the sought-for common identity of the German people and their Army.)

It is repugnant to think that Hitler's evil notions had anything to do with the high quality of German operational and tactical performance in 1939-1945. But, as Professor Forster writes, "difficult though it is to discuss the ideological bond between Hitler and the military within the framework of [military] effectiveness," it is necessary to do so.

Forster's thesis bears on fundamental issues of motivating troops and their combat leaders in battle. Conduct of battle is not simply a matter of "doctrine" and "training." Effective unit performance in this most stressful of human experiences is above all a matter of personal character and of leadership in all its dimensions and intangibles.

"Effective" the Nazi motivation method for the German Army may have been and, likewise, effective Stalin's and his successors' own brands of motivation may be for the Red Army. While we must be aware that our opponents may well utilize such methods of motivation as were used by Hitler and Stalin in World War II, these are not the methods for the American soldier. The challenge for America is to produce, in our own way, battle leadership like that of the 88th Infantry Division -- as exemplified by Generals Sloan and Kendall and Colonels Crawford, Fry, and Champeny -- and to do it in every combat formation.

* * * * *

However, for superior military effectiveness in the operational and tactical realms, military forces require more than superior troop leadership. Also needed are means for war that meet the conditions of war. The desired combination is this: weaponry that is right; organization that is right; and ways of operating that are right -- all for the here-and-now time and place -- plus superior troop leadership.

These studies underline that the combination is rarely achieved. For example, in his treatment of the American military in the inter-war years, Professor Ronald Spector says, "A general appraisal... tends to suggest that the Army overemphasized the central role of foot infantry and

neglected the role of tanks and mechanization; that the Navy overemphasized the big-gun battleship at the expense of aviation, anti-submarine, and amphibious warfare; and that the semi-autonomous Army Air Corps tended to overemphasize bombing at the expense of air defense and ground support roles."²⁹

If Professor Spector's assessment is correct, what went wrong and what must our military institutions do today to prevent the audit of war at some future time from making an equally damning assessment?

These twenty-one historians raise the larger question: How do a nation's military institutions generate the right mix of people, organizations, weaponry, and ways of operating? Does it just "happen that way?" Is that how the Roman legions came about? Or the Royal Navy of Lord Nelson's time? Or the mobile armies of Genghis Khan? No, it's not "chance" that creates superior military institutions and their forces, but men. When results are superior, there are guiding hands. When results are inferior, there are hands that should have guided but did not. There is also "process," but not a simple self-executing process, or a process that anyone can carry out. A high order of institutional and individual insight, coupled with plain, ordinary efficiency, is needed for successfully carrying out the process.

In the American case, the Congress by law has assigned the responsibility to "organize, train, and equip" effective forces to the four Services themselves (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps) under the three military departments (Army, Navy, and Air Force). For bringing the four Services together so that they function as a single coordinated team, the responsibility belongs to the Secretary of Defense, assisted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and to those who hold unified command in the field. Far more complex and amorphous than leading a division or corps, this process depends on collective institutional

action. In the American Army today it has become the work of an immense multi-layered mechanism called "combat development."

To a degree, the mechanics of the process are important. But concentrating on the process risks losing sight of the substance. And ordered or not, guided or not, the process takes place in each Service and in the multi-Service composites wherever they may be. For the enlightened development of forces, the basic sequence is the same as in field command. Someone, or some group of people, has to take responsibility, diagnose the situation accurately and set the objective, develop an appropriate action plan, and execute the plan well, adapting to changing circumstances. Obviously, leadership is linked to all this. Like troop leadership, it is a combination of insight and execution, but these are exercised at the collective, institutional level. The personal insight and executive ability of the most senior officers are the decisive components.

This is how it was, when time was short and the danger great, with the Soviet Army from mid-1940 to June 1941. In June 1940, Hitler had just swept Britain from the continent and forced France to her knees. The German Blitzkrieg had been awesome; Stalin feared that the USSR would be next. But in the winter of 1939-40, fighting the Finns, the Soviet Army had shown grave weaknesses. Professor Ziemke describes how Stalin, his Communist party chieftains, and his generals played for time and urgently coped. They got less time than they wanted, but when Germany struck in June 1941, enough had been done to prevent total disaster.³⁰

The usual problem is not one of short-term urgent change but rather of longer range evolution; war, although always possible, is usually not imminent. Here, consistent, wise leadership must be exercised over a long period of time. These histories indicate that this process was

difficult enough forty to seventy years ago. How much more demanding it is in this age of nuclear weapons and microchips, smart missiles and spacecraft, and night vision and robotics, not to mention "low intensity conflict." The very range and complexities of combat that are open to our current military forces suggest that the future wars that we fight may well not be the war for which we have prepared. And we will have to adapt to the real conditions, not to what we had expected to find.

* * * * *

These twenty-one studies tell us that an indispensable ingredient of effective response is insight: understanding the situation at the time. Insight might be highly personal at the level of the division or even the major force. Insight will of necessity be collective, or institutional, at the level of a nation's Services and within a major force such as Fighter Command. All too often insight is gained too late, and through adverse experience. Intellect alone does not guarantee insight. Neither does experience. Soldierly virtues such as integrity, courage, loyalty, and steadfastness are valuable indeed, but they are often not accompanied by insight. Insight comes from a willing openness to a variety of stimuli, from intellectual curiosity, from observation and reflection, from continuous evaluation and testing, from conversations and discussions, from review of assumptions, from listening to the views of outsiders, and from the indispensable ingredient of humility.

Certainly the responsible officer must be a man of decision, willing to settle on a course of action and to follow it through. But the reflective, testing, and tentative manner in which insight is sought does not mean indecisiveness. It simply raises the likelihood that the decided course of action will be successful because it is in harmony with the real situation that exists.

While insight is the secret of good generalship in any situation, it is even more a requirement among the intangibles, nuances, and obscurities of a situation like Vietnam. In his recent book on Vietnam, General Bruce Palmer, Jr., US Army, (Ret.), has described how the United States could have "done things differently [in] probably . . . a more feasible alternative" to the war of attrition that American forces pursued. Palmer writes that we should have used American troops only in the northernmost part of South Vietnam. We should have deployed them (with South Vietnamese and South Korean divisions) along the 17th parallel's demilitarized zone and into Laos, blocking the Ho Chi Minh trail so as to cut off overland infiltration of support from North Vietnam. And we should have relied on the Vietnamese civil authorities, armed forces, and militia, with US advice and assistance, to take care of the pacification of their own countryside.³¹

In his critique of the Vietnam war, Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., cites a 1977 seminar at the US Army War College in which General Palmer "saw clearly what should have been done." Colonel Summers praises the strategic approach which General Palmer on that occasion described.³²

However, the issue is not critique after the event, but insight before the faulty judgments were made. Were these retrospective insights of General Palmer and Colonel Summers available in 1965? The answer is most certainly yes; they were not all that difficult to reach. The problem is how to arrange the nature of American military institutions so that the senior generals in charge of affairs will arrive at correct insights at the time of challenge and, having so arrived, will possess the skills to effect the systematic effort for which those insights call. And one must recognize that the obstacles to insight are many: one's own propaganda, accepting the conventional wisdom, superficial thinking, blindness to reality, self-satisfaction, complacency, and arrogance.

Professor Carl Boyd describes some of these characteristics and the consequences for the Japanese Navy in 1919-1941. He notes the "fleet-versus-fleet duel" mind-set of the Japanese Navy in 1919-1941 that derived from that Navy's successes around the turn of the century. He cites "the vested interests of most tradition-minded admirals" and says, "In the areas of convoy escort and anti-submarine warfare, the Japanese Navy became a victim of its previous rigid thinking." He writes that a "high price would be paid [for this rigidity] for during the Second World War US Navy submarines accounted for the destruction of about 55 percent (1,314 vessels, 5.3 million tons) of all Japanese naval and merchant vessels lost."³³

Doughty describes what happened in France, 1919-1940: the inexorable logic once certain assumptions were made, and the failure to objectively examine those assumptions; the fixation on total mobilization as the only response; the fundamental misunderstanding of the kind of war for which Germany was preparing; the misconception of the role of armor and of movement in war; a fixed image of how the war would go; the stifling effect of senior officer self-satisfaction. Even to the time of the German attack in May 1940, the French, and the world, saw the French Army as a formidable military force. Yet it was hollow, in decay within. The consequence was the defeat of France in less than six weeks.

Obstacles to execution are equally abundant: inefficiency, poor organization, vested interests, lack of resources, lack of interest, lack of determination, laziness, acceptance of the status quo. Both Italy and Britain between the wars provide examples of the difficulties of "execution," assuming that the insights were present (which they were, to some degree). For Britain, obstacles included the pervasive horror of the Great War, the demands of imperial defense, and the unwillingness of the political leadership to spend money on military forces. For

Italy, there was, among other factors, sheer and complete ineptitude in the management of resources and manpower.

As for Vietnam, General Palmer faults the insight of senior American military leaders in the 1960s, and in particular the collective insights of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Whether, with superior insight, the execution would have been adequate is another question. At least there would have been a chance for success.

Our histories tell us that -- whether it be through lack of insight, or of execution, or of both -- the consequence, in sum, is military folly and failure. In the Vietnam case, a riveting memorial at the west end of the Mall in Washington, bearing the names of some 58,000 Americans who deserved better of their military institutions, symbolizes one of the consequences.

* * * * *

How do we arrange our American military institutions so that they meet the imperatives at the operational and tactical levels and so that they do not fail when put to the test but, rather, succeed? The primary answer, above all, is those who are responsible for our military institutions have to concentrate on developing leadership of the right kind. This is self-evident; leadership should be an objective. But not self-evident is the "kind" of leadership or how to go about assuring superior leadership of that kind.

The American military must develop its own standards, but it could do worse than to start with those listed by Generaloberst Halder.³⁴ Then ways must be found to bring about conditions that produce the desired

quality of operational and tactical leadership. We neither need nor want to reproduce the German General Staff system, and we must insist on a far higher performance by our military in the political and strategic realms. But we might best begin with the characteristics of the system that produced generations of superior German performance on the field of battle: very high standards of performance; a school system that with historical and other study and thought developed and fostered the spread of those standards, and indoctrinated the officer corps with what those standards meant in practice; a chain of command that understood what these standards meant and saw to it that they governed what officers did in units and on staffs; and a system of selection for responsible positions that ensured that those selected met the standards and screened out those who did not.

The fundamental issue is what kind of leadership is our high command interested in? The top military echelons of each of our military institutions (each Service and the Joint Chiefs of Staff) have to decide the kind of leadership they want and the basic standards of acceptable performance. Then all subordinate institutions must fall in line -- field commands and schools alike -- to foster development of that kind of leadership, and to ensure that those selected for responsible positions meet those standards. The schools especially must be positive influences for excellence. Indeed, they are the critical component of the second essential: an insight-producing climate that encourages and derives from open, honest, and reflective thought.

Nowhere is such insight more needed than in the processes through which the future shape of American armed forces, both single- and multi-Service, is determined. Here again, the schools, in close touch with field commands, must be wellsprings of enlightened thought.

This cannot be thought generated and prescribed by generals and admirals, from the top down. This is thought that also, even mostly, comes up from below, stimulated by the experience and intellectual effort that officers go through in the field and by their research and thought in schools. Among other duties, one duty of generals is to observe, to think, and to listen to their officers.³⁵ Break down the compartments of Service parochialism, of "turf," of hierarchical layering, wherever they exist. Let insight evolve from an atmosphere of open, shared thought.

Insight also stems from honest audits, in the absence of the audit of war. Whatever ideas emerge from the process for developing forces and their ways of fighting, the composite must be tested and subjected to an experience that closely resembles that of war. An honest audit of current and programmed systems for command and control of multi-Service forces would reveal them as compartmented, data-clogged, slow, and vulnerable. Ways are emerging for achieving an honest audit. With intelligently designed computer support, we should be able to provide commanders and staffs as well as their communications links a practical experience in the conduct of warfare. The most telling lessons are those of experience, of history in which one has actually participated. Such simulations of warfare for commanders of warfare can let them experience "military history written in advance."

* * * * *

The military institutions of the United States are entering a time of fundamental change. The Congress has enacted legislation which will encourage the development of multi-Service professional expertise and will mandate its manifestation in the Joint Staff, in the joint schools and colleges, and in the unified commands.

One hopes that the new institutional alignment, which establishes a Vice Chairman of the JCS, second in rank to the Chairman, and which makes the Joint Staff responsible directly to the Chairman, will bring about the emergence of responsible, objective, independent, coherent, continuing, responsive multi-Service military thought. One hopes that, as the institutional reforms now legislated are carried out over the next few years, the matters of leadership and of a climate which fosters insight will receive from senior military professionals in positions of responsibility the emphasis which is their due. One hopes that, in their wisdom toward the achievement of insight, those senior military professionals will unleash the creative thought and energies of their schools and colleges (especially the joint institutions), toward an understanding of the lessons of the past and the meaning of these lessons for the present.

The twenty-one historians involved in the Military Effectiveness Project have given us a good deal to think about. Now it is up to the senior American military leadership to present the American people with the combination of insight and execution that nations have the right to demand from their military institutions. If they do not, future historians will judge them deficient when their product is audited by the test of war.

Notes

1. For the Guidance Essay see: Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth N. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," International Security, Summer 1986, pp. 37-71.
2. They were: for Britain, Professor Paul Kennedy, Yale University, Brian Bond, King's College,

University of London, Professor Williamson Murray, Ohio State University; for the United States, Dr. Timothy Nenninger, National Archives, Dr. Ronald Spector, Chief Historian, Professor Allan R. Millett, Ohio State University, Colonel, USMCR; for Italy, Professor John Gooch, University of Lancaster, Professor Brian Sullivan, Yale University, and Professor MacGregor Knox, University of Rochester; for Germany, Professor Holzer Herwig, Vanderbilt University, Dr. Manfred Messerschmidt, Military History Institute, Federal Republic of Germany, Jurgen Forster, Military History Institute, Federal Republic of Germany; for France, Professor Douglas Porch, The Citadel, Colonel Robert Doughty, United States Military Academy, Dr. Chalmers Hood, Woodbridge, Virginia; for Japan, Professor Ian Nish, University of London, Professor Carl Boyd, Old Dominion University, Professor Alvin Coox, San Diego State University; for Russia, Dr. David R. Jones, Dalhousie University, Professor Earl Ziemke, University of Georgia, Dr. John E. Jessup, Colonel, US Army (Ret.); and summary by Dr. Russell F. Weigley, Temple University.

3. Correlli Barnett, The Swordbearers, Studies in Supreme Command in the First World War (London, 1963, and New York: Morrow, 1964), p. 10.
4. Williamson Murray, "British Military Effectiveness in World War II," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, in vol. III, to be published by Allen & Unwin, London, in 1987-88.
5. Timothy Nenninger, "American Military Effectiveness in World War I," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. I, to be published 1987-88.

6. MacGregor Knox, "The Italian Armed Forces, 1940-1943," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. III, to be published 1987-88.
7. Robert Doughty, "The French Armed Forces, 1918-1940," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. II, to be published 1987-88.
8. Murray, "British Military Effectiveness in World War II," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. III, to be published 1987-88.
9. See John Terraine, The Right of the Line; The Royal Air Force in the European War 1939-1945 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985); and Derek Wood and Derek Dempster, The Narrow Margin, The Battle of Britain and the Rise of Air Power 1939-1940 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).
10. See Williamson Murray, The Change in the European Balance of Power, 1938-1939 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) and Wesley Wark, The Ultimate Enemy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
11. Gay M. Hammerman and Richard G. Sheridan, The 88th Infantry Division in World War II: Factors Responsible for its Excellence (Dunn Loring, VA: Historical Evaluation and Research Organization, 1981).
12. Ibid., p. 35.
13. Earl Ziemke, "The Soviet Armed Forces in the Interwar Period," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. II, to be published in 1987-88.

14. John E. Jessup, "The Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. III, to be published 1987-88.
15. Ibid.
16. Michael Carver, Tobruk (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1964), p. 255.
17. Russell F. Weigley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants; The Campaign of France and Germany 1944-1945 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 729-30. For the performance of the German army, heavily attrited on the Eastern Front after three years of combat, see also Max Hastings, Overlord (Greenville, NC: S&S Publishing, Inc., 1984).
18. Trevor N. Dupuy, Numbers, Prediction and War: Using History to Evaluate Combat Factors and Predict the Outcome of Battles (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1985).
19. See in particular Martin Van Creveld, Fighting Power (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1982).
20. Juergen Forster, "The Dynamics of Volksgemeinschaft: The Effectiveness of the German Military Establishment in the Second World War," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. III, to be published in 1987-88.
21. US, Department of the Army, Europe, Historical Division, Analysis of United States Field Service Regulations, by Generaloberst Franz Halder, et al., 1953.

22. Ibid., p. 7.
23. See Williamson Murray, "German Response to Victory in Poland: A Case Study in Professionalism," Armed Forces and Society, Winter, 1981, pp. 285-98.
24. Halder, Analysis of United States Army Field Service Regulations, pp. 8-9.
25. Trevor N. Dupuy, A Genius for War; the German Army and General Staff, 1807-1945 (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1984), pp. 300-302.
26. Forster, "Dynamics of Volksgemeinschaft," p. 351.
27. Ibid., pp. 382-83.
28. Ibid., pp. 402-3.
29. Ronald Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the United States Armed Forces, 1919-1939," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. II, to be published in 1987-88. Professor Spector goes on to say that only the Marine Corps, with a narrowly defined mission, totally dependent on the larger Services for support, appears to have emphasized a balanced all-arms approach to combat. He might also have said that for the United States the between-the-wars period ended with the Pearl Harbor disaster. Here, the audit of war revealed the most fundamental flaws in the American approach to multi-Service operational command in the field.
30. Ziemke, "Soviet Armed Forces."
31. Bruce Palmer, Jr., The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam (New York: Norton, 1985), pp. 183-88.

32. Harry G. Summers, Jr., On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), pp. 122-24.
33. Carl Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness: The Interwar Period," in On the Effectiveness of Military Institutions, vol. II, to be published 1987-88.
34. Halder, Analysis of United States Field Service Regulations, p. 7.
35. See particularly Timothy T. Lupfer, The Dynamics of Doctrine, The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War (Ft. Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College and Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1981), pp. 8-9, for an outstanding discussion of how the senior German leadership was willing to listen to the captains and majors who were waging the front line battle along the Somme in order to reform and improve German tactical doctrine.

The Author

Lieutenant General John H. Cushman, US Army (Ret.), is a military consultant and the author of Command and Control of Theater Forces: Adequacy.

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Editorial Reader: Major Bob Dela-Cruz, US Army
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